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Meet Walter Lippmann

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TO MOST people who have been reading him through the years, Walter Lippmann is two things—a face which never seems to change in the photograph which often accompanies his column, and a point of view which cannot be fitted under any of the stock labels by which Americans identify their public personalities.

The changelessness of the face is justified by fact. Walter Lippmann disciplines body as well as mind and environment. His weight, 180 pounds on a big five-foot-ten frame, has not changed in the fifteen years I have known him. The quiet, inquiring eyes under the arched brows, the courteous friendliness of manner broken rarely but decisively by a shrug which stops a [illegible]

[illegible] check their opinions against him. They frequently disagree, but the disagreement is respectful and seldom entirely confident. It is a comforting confirmation of an opinion to find Walter Lippmann concurring. He who disagrees usually reviews his own thinking on the subject in question.

Another measure of his stature is that when he makes his annual winter trip to some selected part of the world (this year it was to Latin America) his reports are studied by foreign offices with a respect not always accorded the opinions of their own ambassadors. Governments seek the honor of being visited by him and prepare for his arrival as carefully as they would for a visit by the Secretary of State of the United States. Other journalists seek audiences with the great and near great. He never asked to see Nikita Khrushchev. The Soviet government sought his visit to Khrushchev for several years before Walter Lippmann agreed to go.

The disciplined aloofness from partisanship which marks Lippmann thinking can be traced through his Presidential preferences of recent years. He [illegible] in the Dewey of 1948 a [illegible] the country [illegible] troubles [illegible] controversial and [illegible] four years [illegible] administration [illegible] of the respect of [illegible] of the country. [illegible] Truman victory [illegible] that it did mean, [illegible] period of do- [illegible]

[illegible] 1952 the United [illegible] the [illegible]

emerged into the unavoidable choice of Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1952. By that time Lippmann agreed that the Eisenhower "father image" was the only available device which could rescue the country from the travail of the McCarthy period. But he was the first thereafter to question the competence of a "father image" to govern the country. He pointed out the uncomfortable parallels to the Grant administration.

By 1956 the country had sufficiently regained its health to be able to get along without a man whose competence was primarily as a nurse presiding over a convalescence. Lippmann preferred the intelligent and healthy Stevenson to an ailing Eisenhower who had been persuaded that he could run, win, and [illegible]

their previous spouses and friends, to move from New York to Washington. They settled in a middle-period house across Woodley Road from the North Transept of the National Cathedral. The house was the former deanery of the Cathedral—big enough to provide an upstairs study which can be completely isolated from other household activities and a drawing room big enough to accommodate a hundred guests at a reception. It is neither fashionable nor unfashionable, neither "modern" nor "colonial." Helen Lippmann has furnished it out of their respective family heritages and their annual trips abroad. No room is furnished in any "period," It is a quietly elegant, comfortable house which serves as a place for Lippmann work by day and for social entertainment at other times.

There is also a summer place near Bar Harbor, in Maine. It consists of a central building flanked by separate cottages, one for the Lippmanns and another for guests. The complex, all in unfinished planks, is directly on the shore and separated by forest from the neighboring village. No other habitation is visible from it.

His Work Schedule

The daily Lippmann routine of work in the morning, exercise in the afternoon (he plays good golf and tennis and is fiercely competitive on the croquet field), and guests for dinner prevails equally in Washington and in Maine. (Dinner jackets are omitted at dinner in Maine.) The family consists of Walter and Helen Lippmann and two pedigreed, large, black poodles.

Annually and as regularly as the seasons the Lippmanns transfer (in a two-[illegible] Maine [illegible] and back to Washington in the fall, with dogs and two maids. The routine is varied in Presidential election years, when they come back to Washington during the conventions. The television set is moved from the servants' quarters to the drawing room for the occasion.

Walter Lippmann does not write during the annual winter trips. He compiles his report on his findings when it is over.

The houses in Washington and Maine and the winter trips combine to form an orderly context for the gathering of information, reflection, writing, and cross-fertilization of ideas. Discordant intrusions on the routine seldom occur. A Lippmann column written after a trip which experienced overcrowding of air lines, hotels and European city [illegible]

frequent disagreements with him. Over 200 other newspapers, many of which are also Republican, some overseas, publish the Lippmann column.

A possible parallel to the successful anomaly of Walter Lippmann and the Herald Tribune is the relationship of Presidents to some of their appointees to the Supreme Court. Publishers and their editorial writers, like Presidents, plead causes. Justices, and Walter Lippmann, review the causes and render opinions. It is not so much a matter of challenge, as of different function.

His Conversation

People meeting Walter Lippmann for the first time are usually surprised by two things about him: his lack of awesomeness, and his inclination to listen rather than to talk. His conversation does not sparkle with diamonds of inspired wisdom, or profound assertions. No one recalls ever hearing Walter Lippmann "preach." His speaking voice is quiet, never compulsive, never raised loudly. It is a silent glance, not a noise, which condemns beyond appeal an inanity or banality.

He still expresses pleased surprise over the cordial welcome given himself and his wife in Washington. He seemed genuinely surprised and even flattered when CBS asked him to appear annually on its television screen—the fact being that every American network had been longing for years to get him before their audiences.

If you ask Walter Lippmann how he is feeling you will get a serious answer. Either he is very well, which he usually is, or something is not quite right, which will be explained briefly, impersonally and accurately.

One does not make idle conversation with Walter Lippmann.

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